

The July issue of *Woodcraft Magazine* included an article on making a wooden-handled hunting knife from a kit. This month you can make a box to keep it in, which will challenge you in entirely different ways. For many, nothing beats a well-crafted knife; on the other hand, some people admire nothing more than a beautiful wooden box. Being able to make both should impress anyone!

I made two boxes using interesting pieces of wood: a solid chunk of spalted maple (the focus of this project), and offcuts of redwood burl from a friend's sculpture. I hope they will inspire you to search

through your (or your friend's) scrap pile for an exotic or highly figured piece of wood in just the right size.

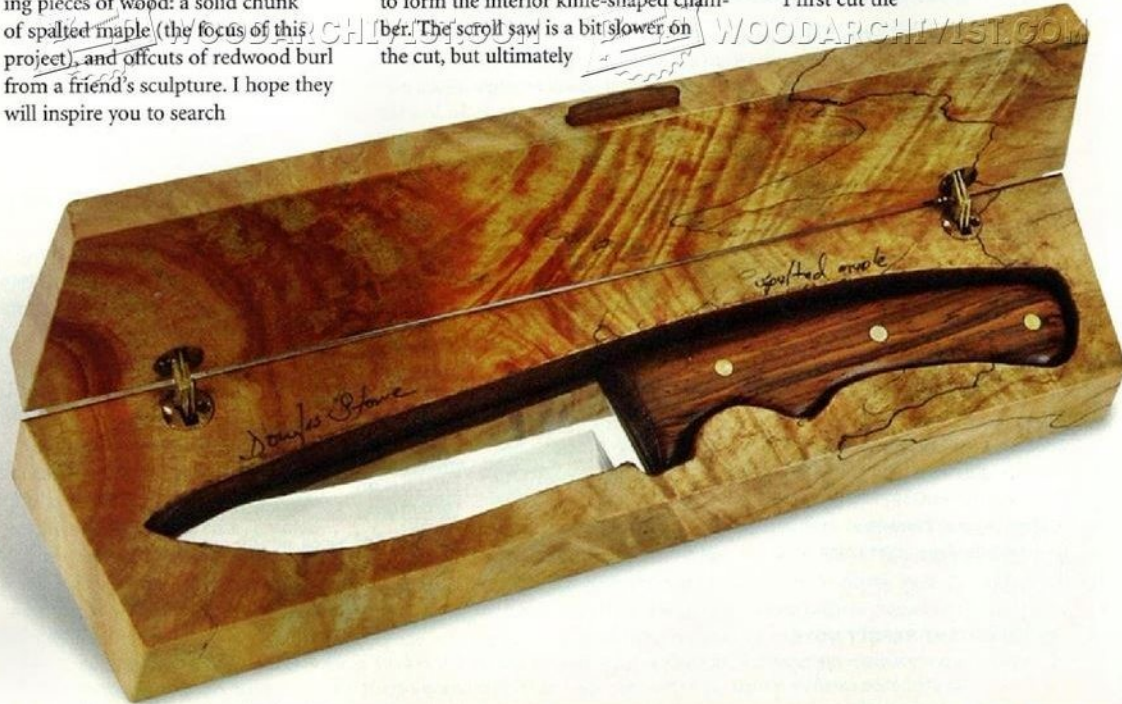
Getting started

I made these boxes using a modification of the common "bandsawn box" technique: cut and reassemble the wood, leaving out the interior pieces. I used a thin-kerf blade on the table saw to cut the bottom from the base of the box, and a scroll saw in lieu of the bandsaw to form the interior knife-shaped chamber. The scroll saw is a bit slower on the cut, but ultimately

saves time by leaving a cut surface that requires very little sanding.

To safely handle these cuts on the table saw, I used double-sided tape to hold the wood to a sliding fence as the first cuts were made. The tape won't take the place of a good push stick, but does hold the stock safely against the fence during the cut. The first cut was made just to square the stock; and, prior to cutting, two adjoining faces were squared on the jointer.

I first cut the





bottom from the base of the box. When working from a piece of solid wood, it is best to make this thinnest cut first. Then set the fence to cut right at the center of the remaining stock.

Fig. 1 shows this cut with the box bottom in the foreground.

Use the knife or a knife blank to trace the pattern on the base, being careful to leave room for the 10mm barrel hinges at the back edge of the box (**Fig. 2**).

Cut out the interior. I chose to cut into the end of the stock, using the scroll saw to begin my cut. You could also choose to begin your cut by drilling a starting hole and eliminate the need for gluing the starting cut closed. To close the starting cut, simply use a piece of card stock to apply glue to the inside of the cut (**Fig. 3**) and then clamp it together.

After the interior is cut in the lower part of the box, align the grain in the top, base and bottom of the box and trim the ends so that all three parts are the same length.

Aligning the hinge holes

I use what I call a "flipping story stick" technique to ensure alignment of the holes for the barrel hinges (#27C11 woodcraft.com) to be drilled in the top and bottom of the box. If these hinges

aren't set perfectly, they can bind and wear. This technique provides perfect results without the complications of conventional measuring.

First cut a piece of wood the same length as the box parts. Set up the fence on the drill press to control the distance from the hinge to the back of the box, and set the depth of the drill to match the required depth for the hinge. Then with a stop block positioned on the drill press fence, drill a hole all the way through the story stick (**Fig. 4**). Flip the story stick over and lower the drill (not running) through the hole drilled in the last step. With the drill locked in position, clamp a stop block in place on the right side of the fence (**Fig. 4, inset**). With stop blocks in position on the left and right, drill the holes for the hinges to fit in the base and lid. If you have followed these steps and the lid and base are exactly the same length, the holes will be in perfect alignment.

As the holes are drilled for the hinges, the base and lid are of equal thickness and shape. Then the lid can

be cut thinner and angled to make the box more interesting. Use double-stick tape again to hold the lid to the sliding fence and tilt the arbor 7°, making sure that the back of the lid still has sufficient thickness for the depth of the hinges.

Assembly and sanding

Use clamps and glue to attach the bottom to the base of the box. Spread glue on the bottom of the scroll-sawn section and carefully align the bottom piece.

Before installing the hinges, rout for a lift tab to fit the lid. Use a 1/8" straight router bit to make this cut by sliding the lid between stops along the router table fence (**Fig. 5**).

Sand the top of the base and the inside surface of the lid prior to installing the hinges. Then simply press the hinges in place and tighten the locking



screws (Fig. 6). After the box is assembled you can provide additional shaping with the table saw to complement the angle of the lid (Fig. 7).

Preparing the lid

The sculpted redwood box was made in much the same manner (Fig. 8). Your box, like my own, need not be perfectly symmetrical. It is important when the holes are drilled for the hinges that the lid and base are the same size and thickness, but after that operation is complete, the lid can be reshaped in relation to the base without affecting the fit.

Rather than make the lid and bottom the same shape as the base of the box, I cut the bottom slightly smaller to provide a slight overhang and I shaped the lid to provide for an integral pull. Both of these design ele-

ments result in a box with a look distinct from the spalted maple box.

To give additional interest to my sculpted redwood box, I used black leather dye on the lid and bottom before the box was assembled and

finished. Simply wipe on the dye, and then use steel wool to polish the wood to bring back some of the interesting burl wood grain. Apply glue carefully to the bottom of the box before gluing it in place. 🌲



Doug Stowe

A 30-year maker of furniture and wooden boxes, Doug Stowe teaches at the Clear Spring School, Arrowmont, Marc Adams School and the Eureka Springs School of the Arts. His most recent book is "Basic Box Making."

